

INTAKE VALVE TIMING IN MULTI-VALVE, CAMLESS ENGINES

Technical Field

The present invention relates to intake valve
5 systems for multi-valve engines, and more particularly
to methods and apparatus for securing desired air-fuel
mixture turbulence level in the combustion chamber in
order to achieve optimum combustion.

Background

10 It is a common goal with vehicle
manufacturers today to provide engine and combustion
systems which improve fuel economy and, at the same
time, reduce undesirable emissions. There are many
systems which have been developed which accomplish one
15 or more of these goals and achieve satisfactory
results. Some of these systems include, for example,
supplying prespecified amounts of fuel and air during
certain engine operating conditions, various combustion
chamber configurations including shaped bowls in the
20 piston crown in order to secure desired air-fuel
mixture and motion under various operating conditions,
intake and exhaust valve mechanisms which create
desired tumble and/or swirl patterns of in-cylinder
flow motion, air-fuel mixture stratifications in the
25 combustion chamber, and the like. Some of these
systems are used in particular for direct injection
spark ignited (DISI) engines.

Charge motion in the combustion chamber is an important factor for generating turbulence which in turn enhances the burn rate in engines. However, the tumble and/or swirl generation often comes at the
5 expense of discharge coefficient, thus reducing the maximum power output of the engine.

Thus, there is a need for an engine combustion system which creates the desired turbulence in the combustion chamber and yet does not degrade the
10 discharge coefficient.

Summary of the Invention

It is an advantage of the present invention to provide an improved combustion system for an engine.

It is another advantage of the present
15 invention to provide a high turbulence flow field in the combustion chamber without degrading the discharge coefficient or reducing the maximum output power of the engine.

It is a further advantage of the present
20 invention to provide a combustion system which secures high fuel efficiency and at the same time reduces undesirable emissions.

The present invention provides a system and apparatus for achieving these advantages by generating
25 high turbulence levels in the combustion chamber without degrading the discharge coefficient. In accordance with the present invention, a multi-valve engine is provided with at least two independently operated intake valves in each cylinder. One intake

port is designed for generation of tumble flow while the other is designed for conventional cylinder filling with high flow efficiency. A high swirl and tumble flow, which decays to in-cylinder turbulence during
5 induction and compression, is provided in the combustion chamber by delaying or advancing the opening of one intake valve relative to the other. Each of the intake valves is operated by an electro-mechanical actuator, or electro-hydraulic actuator, which in turn
10 is activated by the engine controller.

At light load conditions, the necessary mixture motion is generated with the intake valve timing to improve burn rate and thermal efficiency. The tumble valve can be disabled allowing only a swirl
15 flow to be generated in the cylinder. At slightly higher load conditions, a combined tumble and swirl flow can be generated. This is accomplished either by opening the conventional valve for a portion of the process to initial swirl and then opening both valves,
20 or by opening the tumble valve alone to generate a negative direction inclined swirl. At still higher load conditions (i.e. mid-load conditions), the opening and closing of the valves is timed for tumble flow generation. At full load conditions, both valves are
25 opened and closed at conventional timings to provide the requisite high flow rate and therefore maximize output power.

The present invention has the flexibility to achieve the proper timing of the opening and closing of
30 the intake valves to secure optimum combustion of the fuel under all operating conditions. The opening and

closing of the intake valves is varied by the engine controller and is dependent on the engine speed and engine load.

Brief Description Of The Drawings

5 FIGURE 1 depicts the overall system in accordance with the present invention;

FIGURE 2 is a schematic illustration of the various components of the present invention;

10 FIGURE 3A, 3B, and 3C illustrate representative operation of the intake valves;

FIGURE 4 is a flow diagram depicting the general manner in which the intake valves are operated under certain load conditions in order to optimize the mixture motion mode; and

15 FIGURE 5 illustrates a representative look-up table for use with the present invention.

Description Of The Preferred Embodiment(s)

20 The formation of swirl or tumble motion of air/fuel mixtures in combustion chambers is important for increasing the burn rate of the fuel in spark ignited engines. In tumble, the inducted air rotates about an axis perpendicular to the axis of the cylinder. Swirling air flow motion has its axis of rotation parallel to the cylinder axis. Finally, the
25 word "swumble" denotes in-cylinder flow motion with an axis of rotation inclined relative to the cylinder axis.

In many cases, the generation of the tumble and/or swirl flows of air comes at the expense of

reducing the discharge coefficient of the flow through the valve by masks or other obstructions to flow being placed in the vicinity of the valve opening. Thus, the power output of the engine is reduced or degraded. The
5 present invention generates high swirl and tumble air flows by delaying or advancing the opening of one intake valve relative to the other in the multi-valve engine and does not degrade the discharge coefficient.

At low flow rate conditions, that is, at low
10 engine speed and light load, one of the intake valves is deactivated to generate a charge motion which provides adequate mixing and robust combustion. Robust combustion is necessary to provide stable combustion, which results in high efficiency and low emission of
15 unburned fuel.

At full load conditions, where the demand is for maximum engine power, the timing of the valves is arranged to provide maximum air flow into the combustion chamber. More in-cylinder charge results in
20 more engine output power.

The components and system of the present invention are shown in Figure 1. A schematic illustration of the various components of the system is shown in Figure 2. Figures 3A-3C depict a
25 representative operation of the intake valves.

In use, the present invention is responsive to the demands of the operator. In this regard, the operator will activate the engine accelerator pedal at
20 which in turn will send a signal to the engine control unit (ECU) 30 indicating operator demand. A
30 spring member 22 is secured to the accelerator pedal 24

in order to provide a tactile feedback to the engine operator 15.

The movement of the accelerator pedal 24 may be registered in an accelerator response mechanism 35 which correlates the linear movement of the accelerator pedal into an appropriate signal 36 and signals from other conventional sensors, such as an engine speed sensor (not shown) and/or an engine temperature sensor (not shown), the ECU sends appropriate signals 38 to the valve actuators 40 which operate the intake valves 50 and 50'.

As indicated, the present invention is used with multi-valve engines. These are engines which have at least two intake valves in each of the cylinders of the engine. In the schematic illustration shown in Figure 1, a representative piston 52 is positioned in a cylinder 54 in an engine 56 installed into a vehicle. The two intake valves 50 and 50' are positioned at the interface of air intake passageway 58 and the engine cylinder 54. A fuel injector (not shown) is used to introduce fuel into the upper area 60 of the cylinder 54, either into and through the air inlet passageways, or directly into the combustion chamber. A spark plug (not shown) is positioned in the cylinder 54 to provide the necessary ignition source for the fuel introduced into the combustion chamber 60.

The electromechanical actuators 40 include solenoid members 70 which are used to longitudinally activate armature members 72 attached to the ends of the intake valve members 50 and 50'. Coil spring members 74 are used to bias the valve intake members 50

and 50' toward their closed or seated positions in the cylinder head. In the closed or seated positions, the intake valve members do not allow air in the intake passageway 58 to enter the combustion chamber 60.

5 As shown in Figures 3A, 3B, and 3C, one or both of the intake valve members 50, 50', can be raised (closed) or lowered (opened) depending upon the engine speed and load. In Figure 3A, intake valve member 50' is opened allowing air to flow from the intake
10 passageway into the combustion chamber, while intake valve member 50 remains in its closed or seated position. This creates a particular pattern of air flow in the combustion chamber 60, depending on the size, position, and angle of inclination of the air
15 passageway 58 and other factors including the pressure drop across the valve 50.

 In Figure 3B, intake valve member 50 is in its open position, while intake valve member 50' is in its closed or seated position. This configuration
20 creates another air flow configuration in the combustion chamber, again depending on the particular size and configuration of the air intake passageway. Finally, in Figure 3C, both valve intake members 50 and 50' are shown in their open (lowered) conditions. This
25 allows the maximum amount of air to enter the combustion chamber and further results in another air flow configuration in the combustion chamber.

 Further, time phasing of opening and closing the valve members relative to each other, can create
30 additional air flow patterns in the combustion chamber.

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To determine the appropriate air flow or turbulence in the combustion chamber, the particular engine in question is evaluated and analyzed. The opening and closing of the valve members, and the particular degree of opening and sequence of opening of one valve member relative to the other can be determined to achieve the optimum combustion of the fuel in the combustion chamber under all operating conditions of the engine. Optimum combustion can be determined based on minimizing fuel consumption, minimizing emissions, maximizing stability, improving other factors, or a combination criteria. The inventors of the present invention have recognized that the camless engine has the necessary flexibility in valve timing to optimized combustion of the engine at all operating conditions.

A multi-valve engine with independently controlled valves, as shown, has a number of advantages. The number of operating valves at any given speed or load can be selected to optimize the energy consumption and performance. A multitude of flow patterns can be accessed with the flexible operating characteristics of the engine so that predominantly swirl, predominantly tumble, and swumble flow can be formed.

A flow diagram depicting the general manner in which the intake valves can be operated under certain load conditions to optimize the mixture motion mode and increase fuel economy is shown in Figure 4. As a first step 100, the two intake ports are provided such that one creates tumble flow (V-1) while the other

is a standard conventional intake port (V-2). For a tumble-type intake port, typically the intake channel is configured to introduce air into the cylinder in a substantially vertical direction. Tumble-type intake
5 ports are well known in the art and any conventional design can be utilized.

At this point, a look-up table 102 is utilized to determine the optimum mixture mode for the engine. The optimum mixture mode depends on one or
10 more operating conditions of the engine, for example, the load generated by the engine and the location of the piston relative to the crank angle. A representative look-up table 130 is shown in Figure 5. A specific look-up table will be generated for each
15 engine or type of engine and will result in various valve open and closing configurations depending on the load percentage and rpm (revolutions per minute) of that particular engine. In this regard, each engine design is calibrated to find the optimum mixture motion
20 mode for that particular engine. A look-up table is then generated and utilized to provide the requisite operating condition (e.g. Nos. 1-4) to maximize combustion and thereby increase fuel efficiency and reduce emissions. In the look-up table 130, condition
25 number one ("1") is utilized where the load is 30 percent or less and the rpm is 3,000 or less. As the load and rpm increase, the condition changes to numbers 2, 3, and 4 as indicated. These are indicated also by reference numerals 132, 134, 136 and 138, respectively,
30 in Figure 5, and correspond to "No. 1," "No. 2," "No. 3," and "No. 4," respectively in Figure 4.

With the present invention, a full control of the fluid motion within the cylinders of the engine is provided which results in improved combustion of fuel in the engine. This, in turn, increases the fuel economy of the engine, as well as decreasing undesirable emissions.

At load condition No. 1, which is idle condition, the optimum mixture mode, as shown in box 104, has high swirl without any tumble motion. This is generated by disabling the tumble intake valve in port V-1, as shown in Box 106, and allowing a swirl flow motion to be generated in the cylinder. This improves idle stability and increases the initial flame kernel growth. Robust combustion depends on the early flame growth.

Load condition No. 2 is a light-load condition. For optimum air/fuel motion in the cylinder, a combined swirl and tumble motion (swumble) is provided 108. As shown in Box 110, only the conventional intake valve in port V-2 is opened through a portion of the intake process to initiate a swirl motion in the cylinder. Thereafter, both valves are opened, which allows the tumble motion to incline the swirl axis. As an example, port valve V-2 can be opened when the piston is from -45° to $+45^{\circ}$ before top dead center (TDC) and port valve V-1 can be opened when the piston is at 80° before TDC.

An alternate procedure for light-load conditions is shown in Box 112. Under this procedure, the tumble valve (port valve V-1) is opened by itself. This generates an inclined swirl air/fuel motion in the

negative or opposite direction. In this regard, under both conditions 110 and 112, an air-fuel mixture having a tilted or inclined swirl motion is generated, although in opposite directions.

5 At still higher-load conditions (condition No. 3), which are also called mid-load conditions, a tumble motion 114 is generated in the engine cylinders. Mid-load conditions can result, for example, when the engine is operating under constant speed conditions,
10 such as traveling on an expressway. As shown in Box 116, both valves are opened at the same time throughout the intake process. The opening of the valves is timed to coincide with maximum piston motion to generate the requisite tumble motion. For example, both valves are
15 closed when the piston is at bottom dead center (BDC), both valves are opened from 100° to -75° before TDC, and both valves are closed thereafter.

 During midrange power conditions, only about 50% of the air which could be inducted by the engine is
20 required to develop this load. With the present invention, improved dilution tolerance is provided; that is, due to higher mixture motion, a greater amount of dilution with exhaust gases can be added to the combustion gases without impairing combustion
25 stability. Higher levels of dilution with exhaust gases helps reduce NO_x emissions and makes the engine more efficient, the latter benefit largely due to reduced pumping losses.

 The full load condition is shown as the No.
30 4 condition in Figure 4 and indicated by the reference numeral 118. Full load conditions can result, for

example, when the vehicle is accelerating to pass another vehicle or traveling uphill. At this point, as shown in Box 120, both valves are opened at timings to maximize air induction quantity. The flow rate through the intake ports into the cylinder is greatest at full load and the turbulence level of the mixture inducted into the cylinder is high. There is no need to induce a large scale flow structure, such as tumble or swirl, which persists in the cylinder until the time of spark.

10 The combustion difficulty encountered at high load operating conditions tends to be combustion harshness which is a result of combustion occurring at too rapid a rate. This is countered by reducing the turbulence level in the cylinder, which is a measure which leads to maximum induction of air. This improves maximum power from the engine.

Although specific configurations of air passageways and intake valve members are shown, it is understood that the present invention can be utilized in any multi-valve engine having any form of air passageways or intake valve members. Also, the electromechanical activators 40 shown in the drawings are by way of example only. Any known or equivalent type of activators for opening and closing intake valve members can be utilized, and the present invention is not restricted to any particular one of them.

While the invention has been described in connection with one or more embodiments, it is to be understood that the specific mechanisms and techniques which have been described are merely illustrative of the principles of the invention. Numerous

modifications may be made to the methods and apparatus described without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as defined by the appended claims.

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